

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 /050 W
-----001636 021954Z /65

O 021944Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7272
INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL
ALL OTHER CANADIAN POSTS POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 02249

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: STUNNING TORY GAINS IN APRIL GALLUP POLL

REF: A) OTTAWA 1710; B) OTTAWA 2202

1. GALLUP POLL, CONDUCTED IN EARLY APRIL, AND RELEASED MAY 2 REVEALED REMARKABLE TURN-AROUND IN FORTUNES OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES (PC) ROSE TO 41 POINTS (34 IN MARCH); LIBERALS DROPPED TO 41 POINTS (45 IN MARCH); AND NDP DROPPED TO 14 POINTS (17 IN MARCH). UNDECIDEDS ROSE ONE POINT TO 39 POINTS. POLL GAVE NO REGIONAL BREAKDOWN. SHIFTS IN SUPPORT ARE GREAT-EST SINCE EARLY 1977.

2. COMMENT: FLAGGING LIBERAL SUPPORT WAS ASSUMED BY MOST OBSERVERS HERE TO BE REASON FOR TRUDEAU RELUCTANCE TO CALL ELECTION FOR JUNE (REF B). MAGNITUDE OF TURN-AROUND AS REVEALED BY GALLUP POLL, HOWEVER, HAS APPARENTLY SURPRISED EVERYONE, EVEN TORIES. TORY POLLSTER AND TORY MP TOLD EMBOFFS MAY 2 THAT PC POLLING DATA SHOWED INCREASING SUPPORT FOR PC BUT NOT ON ORDER REFLECTED IN GALLUP POLL. THEY COULD NOT IDENTIFY ANY SPECIFIC EVENT AS REASON FOR
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7 POINT TORY JUMP. RATHER, THEY EXPRESSED VIEW THAT ELEC-TORATE IS NOW DEMONSTRATING GENERAL UNWILLINGNESS TO EXPERIENCE ANOTHER FOUR YEARS OF PM TRUDEAU AND HIS LIBERAL GOVERNMENT. THEY CONCEDED THAT GROWING PC SUPPORT WAS MORE ANTI-TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT THAN PRO TORY LEADER JOE CLARK.

3. DROP IN NDP SUPPORT MAY REPRESENT GROWING POLARIZATION.

A SEGMENT OF NDP VOTE IS A FORM OF PROTEST SINCE NDP HAS NEVER BEEN CLOSE TO FORMING A GOVERNMENT. NOTICEABLE NUMBER OF VOTERS NOW MAY BE UNWILLING TO WASTE VOTE AS A PROTEST AND MAY SUPPORT TORIES SIMPLY TO REMOVE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT. IN ANY CASE, HOWEVER, LARGE UNDECIDED PERCENTAGE REVEALS THAT SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF VOTERS REMAIN UNIMPRESSED WITH BOTH MAJOR PARTIES AND LEADERS. POLL RESULTS MAY SIGNAL DIMINISHING INTEREST IN NATIONAL UNITY ISSUE AND GROWING CONCERN OVER STATE OF THE ECONOMY.

4. MOST RECENT POLL DATA UNDERSCORES TO US THE UNUSUALLY VOLATILE NATURE OF THE ELECTORAL SCENE HERE, MARKED BY GENERALLY NEGATIVE FEELINGS. FOR THE MOMENT, VOLATILITY IS OBVIOUSLY WORKING TO PC ADVANTAGE. DRAMATIC TORY RISE SHOULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT AND COULD CAUSE BANDWAGON MOVEMENT AMONG UNDECIDEDS.

5. PREVAILING GUESSING GAME AS TO WHEN ELECTIONS WILL BE CALLED HAS BECOME EVEN MORE POPULAR WITH THESE POLL RESULTS. SOME FEEL THAT TRUDEAU MUST NOW WAIT UNTIL FALL OR LATER IN HOPES OF BETTER LIBERAL DAYS AHEAD. OTHERS, HOWEVER, ARGUE THAT POSTPONEMENT WOULD BE A SIGN OF WEAKNESS AND COULD REINFORCE CURRENT SURGE OF ANTI-LIBERAL, ANTI-TRUDEAU SENTIMENT. ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978OTTAWA02249
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780187-0516
Format: TEL
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197805102/aaaadjdu.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e734d593-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 OTTAWA 1710, 78 OTTAWA 2202
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2518657
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STUNNING TORY GAINS IN APRIL GALLUP POLL
TAGS: PINT, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e734d593-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014